

COPY

Twentieth Anniversary of the Church of Christ,
Congregational, of Berlin, N. H., Nov. 22nd, 1897

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Historical Address by Rev. John B. Carruthers,
Pastor of the Church.

From the organization of the town in 1829 there seems to have been no public interest taken in religion until the summer of 1836, when a Sunday School was established, old and young attending.

There were but two men in the whole town who had the courage to offer prayer in public - Thomas Wheeler, a Free Baptist, and Benjamin Dean, a Methodist. Samuel Blodgett was superintendent of the Sabbath School.

As the school went on, a prayer meeting was held after the school; this prayer meeting exerted a mighty influence on the people and as a result many were converted so that there was not a family in all the place where there was not someone who had learned to pray.

This "great reformation" was reported in the surrounding towns and preachers from other places came to aid the people on their work- Reverends Cogswell from Whitefield, Bean from Maine, Wheeler from Shelburne. Mr. Thomas Wheeler was a licensed Freewill Baptist preacher and he located on a farm in 1837, which was a part of the farm now owned by Hr. John R. Horne. Mr. Wheeler exerted a great influence on the people for good.

About this time another preacher by the name of Elijah Griffin moved into town and aided in the religious work. For three years following the people were not without preaching.

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The "Elders" present (for so the preachers were called at that day) were Elder Cogswell Bean and Austin Wheeler. People came from all the surrounding towns to attend the meetings and they were pronounced the most powerful meetings ever held in the Androscoggin valley.

In 1840 Mr. Wheeler died, and after his death for many years the place seems to have been without regular preaching.

Not until 1853 and 1854 was the work revived. At that time the owners of the mill, H. Winslow & Co. finished off a hall over their store and gave the religious people of the place the privilege of holding religious services in it.

In 1855 James Lord became the superintendent of the mill. He was a devout and earnest christian and through his influence Rev. L. L. Howard, an Advent preacher of West Poland, Maine, held meetings in Berlin for a few weeks.

A deep work of grace followed his efforts and many were converted. Mr. Bailey Davis was among the number and the only one of those converted at that time now in town, as far as we know.

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In 1867 Mr. W. W. Brown came into possession of the mill, and what is known as the BERLIN MILLS. Being a religious man, and Mrs. Brown being a devout and earnest christian, efforts were at once made to make some provisions for services, The Berlin Mills hall was given freely for that purpose whenever needed. There had been up to that time only occasional preaching. Mr. Tewksbury would sometimes come up from Gorham. As there was no pulpit at that time in the hall, Mr. Tewksbury used his tall hat on a table for that purpose.

Mrs. Brown's unassumed piety, unfeigned sympathy and deep womanly character had much to do with moulding the religious character of the place at that time. The memorial window that bears testimony to the indebtedness of this church to her interest and devotion to its welfare is not the only reminder of her goodness; for many hearts beat quick at the mention of her name tonight. "She rests from her labors, but her works do follow her".

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Three Congregational students supplied during the summers, alternating with the Methodist preachers between Berlin and Milan; Mr. George Michael in 1871, Mr. Meridith in 1872, and Mr. A. J. Benedict in 1873 and 1874. The Congregational students seemed to have created a demand for more Congregationalism; for when Mr. Benedict graduated from Yale Seminary in 1875, he was called to supply for that year in Berlin.

He also supplied at West Milan, going there by hand-car. In 1876 he went to Gorham to reside but still continued to preach in Berlin on Sunday afternoons and holding a Sunday School and prayer service in the evening.

At first the working force was so small that the only assistance he received from the people was in singing and reciting of verses of scripture, but by earnest labor some of them were brought to the Savior.

In 1877 it was thought best to organize a church of those who were followers of the Christ. What denomination should it be?- was the question. It seemed to be the prevailing opinion that it ought to be Congregational; no doubt because their young and earnest pastor was of that denomination, and also because it was a church polity under which all could unite in harmony.

The wisdom of this decision has been seen since, for it united them and has since, all persons of whatever faith in one harmonious body and Christian fellowship. The Name " Christ's Church " was chosen in order that people other than Congregationalists might not feel in the least out of place in its fellowship.

Having decided to organize a church, the people sent letters (missive), and the following churches responded:

Lancaster, Gorham, Bethel-1st, Bethel-2nd, (Maine), and State St. Portland.

On Nov. 22, 1877 in Berlin Mills Hall, now a part of the dry goods department of the Berlin Mills store, the Church was organized with the following persons as members:

List of Members -

Rev. A.J. Benedict	Almira Beattie	Mrs. Chester Bean
Mrs. Allen	Louella Coffin	Eva Hobbs
Mrs. Sarah Bean	Frank Coffin	Betsey A. Wheeler
Carrie Ross	Mrs. Charles Noyes	Hannah M. Oleson
John Wilson	Clara Brown	Lucy A. Spaulding
Hannah Wilson	Mr. Chester Bean	Effie Smith
Lizzie J. Parker	Lettie A. Parker	Mrs. H.M. Andrews
Mrs. Katherine Green	Mrs. Peter Phipps	

Mr. W. W. Brown presented the church with a communion service, and it was used at that time.

Mrs. Effie Smith who arranged the decorations for this anniversary, arranged the decorations twenty years ago, the only decorations available at that time were a few pressed ferns and a few chrysanthemums arranged in a vase. The same vase is in use today and contains a cluster of pinks.

Mr. Benedict continued his service with the church until 1881 when he proposed giving up his work in Berlin and preaching altogether in Gorham, but the people of Berlin would not hear to this; and a meeting was held of the church and citizens, and Mr. Benedict was persuaded to continue his work in Berlin.

The Berlin Mills Co. having given a site for a church building, the cornerstone was laid November 3, 1881. The church was dedicated July 22, 1883, having cost \$10,000. Of this sum the people paid \$3000 and W. W. Brown the remainder. Mr. Benedict had resigned in 1882, but was present at the dedication and delivered the historical address. Professor E. Y. Hincks of Andover Theological Seminary preached the sermon.

Mr. Benedict was greatly beloved by the people, especially was he admired by the young men. Thirty-five joined the church under his ministry. I clip the following from a piece written in the Portland Transcript from Berlin, Nov. 1, 1877: "our meetings are well attended, the earnest and able efforts of our young pastor serving to stimulate the people to work together".

Rev. Albert Donnell was called to the pulpit and ordained June 27, 1883. In April, 1884, Mr. Folger, and Mr. Jackson of the Y.M.C.A. of N.H., assisted the pastor in a series of meetings. A marked feature of the meetings was the interest manifested by the boys of the Sunday School. During Mr. Donnell's ministry fourteen joined the church. Mr. Donnell had a very strong influence over

individual lives; and there are those who are making a success of life today who have reason to be thankful that they ever came in contact with this earnest christian young man.

Mr. Donnell resigned the pastorate and was dismissed by a council that convened in connection with the county conference of Bethel, Maine, June 4, 1885. Mr. Donnell was a hard worker and left the church with the best wishes of many friends. Mr. Donnell in his manly letter of resignation had advised the church for its next pastor "a man of years, of experience, and of family".

The church acted wisely on this advice and decided to call Rev. S. L. Bowler, of Bethel, Maine. At a single church meeting the following business was transacted: The church chose delegates, for a council to meet at Bethel for the dismissal of Mr. Donnell, also delegates to act on a council for the dismissal of Mr. Bowler from the church in Bethel, and they voted to call Mr. Bowler to the pastorate in Berlin.

Mr. Bowler began his pastorate in June 1885, and was installed Aug. 10, 1886. In March 1886, Mr. Folger and Mr. Jackson again assisted the pastor in one week's meetings. A Good work was the result. During Mr. Bowler's first year sixteen joined the church. The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was organized in April 29, 1887. During his ministry Mr. Bowler received forty into the church.

The house used for the parsonage was built by the Berlin Mills Co., and has been furnished to the pastors rent-free; and will eventually be given to the church.

Mr. Bowler did much to stimulate what has been since called the Oxford County Mission work, of which Rev. S. S. York has been the efficient missionary.

On Feb. 25, 1890, Mr. Bowler tendered his resignation, and it

was accepted March 11th. Mr. Bowler severed his connection with this church much to the regret of the people. Mrs. Bowler was particularly loved by both old and young, and her memory has ever been kept green by many who have reason to thank God that they have had the counsel of so faithful a friend. The same council that dismissed Mr. Bowler installed Rev. Henry Wheaton.

The council expressed itself in part as follows respecting Mr. Bowler: "This council gladly recognizes the earnest evangelical spirit of Rev. S. L. Bowler; his deep interest in the souls of men; and especially his warm desire for the salvation of the young. We cordially recommend him to the churches as a sound preacher, a faithful pastor, a devoted Sunday School worker, and a brother particularly beloved by his associates in the ministry". We still feel the effects of this faithful ministry in the life of the church.

In the pastorate of Rr. Wheaton, the church was unfortunate and learned the danger of calling a stranger, of whose history they knew nothing, to this pastorate. Mr. Wheaton, however, was an eloquent preacher, and did seme practical work; six united with the church during his pastorate. The church parlor was finished and furnished during his stay, which was brief, from Sept. 16, 1850 to June 14, 1891.

Rev. William Coburn was called next to the pastorate and began work December 16, 1891, and resigned August 3, 1892. Mr. Coburn was a very earnest and energetic worker, an evangelist in methods. There was a revival under his ministry and twenty-six united with the church. The church came to be self-supporting during his pastorate.

The present pastorate (Rev. John B. Carruthers') began March 1st, 1893. In the summer of that year, during the pastor's vacation, Mr. W. W. Brown had the church painted inside, at his own expense, adding greatly to its beauty and attractiveness. During that year the steam heat was put into the auditorium of the church by the

Ladle's Circle at a cost of \$167.00

The Junior Endeavor Society was organized in May of this year with thirty members. In December 1893, the church had the privilege through her pastor, of assisting in the organization of a church in Bartlett, N.H., and ordaining John R. Horne, Jr. to the gospel ministry. I feel that special attention should be called to the fact because John R. Horne Jr. was a boy of the Sunday School, brought into the church through the ministry of Mr. Bowler; so that tonight we celebrate the organization, of one church but of two, within the twenty years.

It is to be questioned, if in all New England, there can be found a parallel case, where a church so young in years has had the privilege of training a boy in Sunday School and Church, who within ten years graduated from college and seminary, entered the ministry, organized a church, doubled its membership in three years, revolutionized the morals of a town and dedicated a church. To send such a man into the world for work is worth all the labor and care of the church during all the years of its history,

In 1895, during the B. Fay Mills' meetings in Portland, Mr. James W. Parker of the Berlin Mills Co. was converted. He sent a letter to the pastor, desiring to meet all of his old friends and tell them of his conversion. As a result, the largest gathering that had ever met within the church walls greeted him. Mr. Parker's words in public and his individual work outside, and, with the assistance of Mr. Herbert L. Gale a gifted evangelist, resulted in the conversion of a good number, - who will long remember the meetings as the beginning of their Christian life.

During this year the Ladies' Circle put electric lights into the church, chapel, and ladies' parlor, a cost of \$310.00, the Junior Endeavor Society paying \$75.00 to the amount. John H. Wilson did the work, which does credit to his ability and skill.

In 1896 a good number joined the church.

The Young Peoples' Society of the Christian Endeavor put steam heat in the chapel and church parlor.

In March of this year, Rev. A. J. Hainer, assisted by the pastors of the Methodist, baptist, and Congregational churches, conducted a series of meetings which resulted in the conversion of a large number of persons, and our church was greatly strengthened, and blessed. So pleased were the people with Mr. Hainer that they invited him to come again in June. His work at this time strengthened the young in their religious life, and the memory of his faithful counsel will long remain in the hearts of those who found the way of life under his guidance. During the present pastorate forty-three have united with the church, twenty-six in confession of faith, and seventeen by letter.

During the history of the church there have been connected with its membership 177 individuals. The church numbers now 119, the Sunday School 125, the Y.P.S.C.E. 88, Juniors 35.

This church since its organization has been the home of a large number who were not Congregationalists in faith but who nevertheless aided greatly in the church's prosperity. It has been the testimony of many that this church seemed like their spiritual home. Within the past two years we have been obliged to let some of these go to establish a church home of their own; as they went out, we bade them God-speed. We are glad to have them with us tonight, that we many rejoice together as we near the twentieth milestone of the church's life.

The church, in its temporal prosperity, has been aided greatly by those who never were enrolled on her books. Such names as Parker, Brown, Oleson, Green, Forbish, and a host of others will ever be remembered in recalling the earnest and unselfish work and gifts of those who have given aid to its strength and growth.

The Ladies' Circle was in the past, and is still in the most efficient organization connected with the societies' life. During its early history it took upon itself great responsibilities, but always met them. Really the church we worship in tonight is a monument to the energy of the Ladies' Circle. I recently learned that twenty years ago, the Ladies' Circle built a plank-walk to the Falls, for the convenience of those who lived there. We do not wonder that the church and society has prospered when such energy was shown at the very beginning. Nor has all the devotion been all in the past. The Ladies' Circle under the efficient management of Mrs. H. J. Brown, has done much for the prosperity of the church and for the community at large. This Circle was able for a number of years to give a very high class course of concerts and lectures, which were appreciated and patronized by the entire community.

The church during Its history has stood for the welfare of the entire community. It has never been narrow in its ways, and has always extended the warm hand of Christian fellowship to any new enterprise that has been for the good of the place. It has always through its ministry and membership, as a whole, championed civic righteousness.

In the early days of the church the name of John Wilson was synonymous with the enforcement of law. Later on the name of E. J. Bonett shines out like a star, and who will ever forget that champion of righteousness? Fearless as a lion, devout as a woman, sincere as a child; a true soldier of the cross !

Brethren and Sisters of the Church:

This church was begotten in the prayers and self-sacrificing efforts of its early members, some of whom have joined the church triumphant, but many remain unto the present day. God has signally blessed this church all along its history, very few clouds have hung over its way. It has, through its ministry and membership, had a wholesome influence

on the community. We believe that although it has done a good work in the past, that it has a still greater work to do in the future. As In the past, it has rebuked sin in the high places, so may it ever do in the future. May it ever be an undimmed light for God and Truth.

May it lead tenderly, seeking souls to the Savior. May it comfort the sorrowing and be a champion of the weak who have no helpers. A true servant of the living God.

RESOLUTIONS adopted at the church meeting, Nov. 24th, 1897:

We, the members of the Congregational church, in reviewing the history of the church for the past twenty years, desire to express our heartfelt thanks to Mr. W. W. Brown for his deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the church; and for the gift of the communion service which meant so much to the church; for his munificent gift to the church to the society during the construction of the church edifice; and for his open and liberal hand during all these years that has made it possible to have many privileges of which it otherwise would have been deprived.

Greatly do we appreciate the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Brown during the recent anniversary occasion. May the blessing of heaven be bestowed upon them with a liberal hand, is the wish and prayer of a grateful people.

We also desire to express our gratitude to the city pastors of other denominations for their expression of fraternal feeling, and to who in any way helped to make our Anniversary occasion one of so much joy and profit.

Emily J. Dresser

Clerk

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In March of this year, Rev. A. J. Hainer, assisted by the pastors of the Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational churches, conducted a series of meetings which resulted in the conversion of a large number of persons, and our church was greatly strengthened, and blessed. So pleased were the people with Mr. Hainer that they invited him to come again in June. His work at this time strengthened the young in their religious life, and the memory of his faithful counsel will long remain in the hearts of those who found the way of life under his guidance. During the present pastorate forty-three have united with the church, twenty-six in confession of faith, and seventeen by letter.

During the history of the church there have been connected with its membership 177 individuals. The church numbers now 119, the Sunday School 125, the Y.P.S.C.E. 88, Juniors 35.

This church since its organization has been the home of a large number who were not Congregationalists in faith but who nevertheless aided greatly in the church's prosperity. It has been the testimony of many that this church seemed like their spiritual home. Within the past two years we have been obliged to let some of these go to establish a church home of their own; as they went out, we bade them God-speed. We are glad to have them with us tonight, that we may rejoice together as we near the twentieth milestone of the church's life.

The church, in its temporal prosperity, has been aided greatly by those who never were enrolled on her books. Such names as Parker, Brown, Oleson, Green, Forbish, and a host of others will ever be remembered in recalling the earnest and unselfish work and gifts of those who have given aid to its strength and growth.

The Ladies' Circle was in the past, and is still the most efficient organization connected with the societies' life. During its early history it took upon itself great responsibilities, but always met them. Really the church we worship in tonight is a monument to the energy of the Ladies' Circle. I recently learned that twenty years ago, the Ladies' Circle built a plank-walk to the Falls, for the convenience of those who lived there. We do not wonder that the church and society has prospered when such energy was shown at the very beginning. Nor has all the devotion been all in the past. The Ladies' Circle under the efficient management of Mrs. H. J. Brown, has done much for the prosperity of the church and for the community at large. This Circle was able for a number of years to give a very high class course of concerts and lectures, which were appreciated and patronized by the entire community.

The church during its history has stood for the welfare of the entire community. It has never been narrow in its ways, and has always extended the warm hand of Christian fellowship to any new enterprise that has been for the good of the place. It has always through its ministry and membership, as a whole, championed civic righteousness.

In the early days of the church the name of John Wilson was synonymous with the enforcement of law. Later on the name of E. J. Bonett shines out like a star, and who will ever forget that champion of righteousness? Fearless as a lion, devout as a woman, sincere as a child; a true soldier of the cross !

Brethren and Sisters of the Church:

This church was begotten in the prayers and self-sacrificing efforts of its early members, some of whom have joined the church triumphant, but many remain unto the present day. God has signally blessed this church all along its history, very few clouds have hung over its way. It has, through its ministry and membership, had a wholesome influence

on the community. We believe that although it has done a good work in the past, that it has a still greater work to do in the future. As in the past, it has rebuked sin in the high places, so may it ever do in the future. May it ever be an undimmed light for God and Truth.

May it lead tenderly, seeking souls to the Savior. May it comfort the sorrowing and be a champion of the weak who have no helpers. A true servant of the living God.

RESOLUTIONS adopted at the church meeting, Nov. 24th, 1897:

We, the members of the Congregational church, in reviewing the history of the church for the past twenty years, desire to express our heartfelt thanks to Mr. W. W. Brown for his deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the church; and for the gift of the communion service which meant so much to the church; for his munificent gift to the church to the society during the construction of the church edifice; and for his open and liberal hand during all these years that has made it possible to have many privileges of which it otherwise would have been deprived.

Greatly do we appreciate the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Brown during the recent anniversary occasion. May the blessing of heaven be bestowed upon them with a liberal hand, is the wish and prayer of a grateful people.

We also desire to express our gratitude to the city pastors of other denominations for their expression of fraternal feeling, and to who in any way helped to make our Anniversary occasion one of so much joy and profit.

Emily J. Dresser

Clerk